FRAGMENTS

OF

A POEM,

INTENDED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN IN
CONSEQUENCE OF READING

MAJOR MAJORIBANKS's

SLAVERY.

BY THE

REVEREND H. E. HOLDER, OF BRISTOL.

ODI PROFANUM VULGUS, ET ARCEO. *HORACE.*

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M DCC XCII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE

West-Indian Merchants and Planters.

Dear Gentlemen!

It has been ever the pride of my life to vindicate the injured. Judge then with what gratification I write on this occasion, when I am myself personally concerned in the injury sustained, as being a West-Indian. How far those who write on the side of attack can justify it to God and their consciences, we cannot presume to determine. I would however advise them to try their principles and practice by this criterion; and above all things to be fully convinced that they are acquainted with the subject on

 which

which they ſcribble. For my own part, I know that they are ignorant, prejudiced, and inflamed with the ſpirit of party. When Pilate aſked our Bleſsed Lord what Truth was, Jeſus Chriſt would never have defined it to be any thing like thoſe diſguſting ingredients of the impugners of the Weſt-Indian humanity.

I have the honour to remain,

with Regard and Eſteem,

Dear Gentlemen,

Your obedient and obliged

humble ſervant,

H. E. Holder.

Redland, near Briſtol,
April 23d, 1792.

INTRODUCTION.

TO be ſilent at a moment when the clamours of falſehood are ſo loud againſt my countrymen, as almoſt to prohibit a poſſibility of being heard at all on the ſide of injured truth, and integrity of *intention* at leaſt, would imply a cowardly ſpirit, which preferred eaſe to virtuous oppoſition, and, I may add, perſecution. It is hardly neceſſary that I ſay, that I allude to the *infamous* attacks which have been made, and are now making, againſt the Weſt-Indians, by the miſguided and the licentious of this country.

The work which I now preſume to reply to, (*currente calamô* indeed, being deeply engaged in ſome very important profeſſional purſuits) is a witneſs of the fact I mention, and lament from my ſoul as a citizen of the world. As a Weſt-Indian I leave the cauſe to GOD; and as a Clergyman and Chriſtian, I will only add, may He bring light out of darkneſs, and reward every man according to his deeds!

Having in the year 1788 publiſhed a pamphlet on the ſubject of Negro Slavery, particularly referring to the ſtate of the Iſland of Barbadoes, my native

native country, I do not mean to repeat here what I then ſaid. I have much more to ſay, and more, I declare, than I wiſh that I could ſay. I think that I have proved in that pamphlet, that *ſlavery was poſitively and literatim countenanced by the Levitical Law.* I *defy* any man to confute the arguments I then ſtated from *ſcripture*, and I warn him, before he attempts it, to refer to the *Hebrew original* of the texts I cite.

I ſhall ever conſider ſlavery as one of the gradations and modifications of ſociety, one of the *inferior links* which bind man to man, and create new duties of fidelity, compaſſion, and mutual good-will, *ſubſiſting*, or *required to ſubſiſt*, between the maſter and ſlave. And I do aſſert, with reſpect to African ſlavery, (though inſtances may occur wherein our trade may have aggravated the African ſtate of warfare) that while Africa, like antient Greece, is divided into petty kingdoms and governments, little competitions of intereſt muſt ariſe, and will be improved by ſavages into occaſions of war; and theſe occaſions of war will be occaſions of bloodſhed and maſſacre, unleſs the opportunity of ſelling the captive may remain.

Common ſenſe will dictate to every one, that the ſavage has no food to throw away, to ſatisfy a hungry captive; and that he has no occupation about which to employ him, which can *immediately* miniſter to his neceſſities. I alſo aſſert, that a Negro in the Weſt-Indies is placed in a

ſtate

ſtate of moral and intellectual improvement, which he can never attain in his own country. And I would ſtake my life upon the veracity of the following poſition, which, if true, contradicts all the fine-drawn arguments of the *would-be wiſe* of this country; namely, that, after three years reſidence in the iſlands, I am convinced that *not one in one hundred Africans* would chooſe to return to their native continent.

I would alſo be underſtood to contend, that the Planters have nothing to do with the reprehenſible part of the ſlave trade buſineſs. They neither trade in Africa, nor are they concerned in their tranſportation. This is the work of holy Engliſhmen! When therefore Major Majoribanks conſiders the planters as the *original inſtigators of the traffic*, I would commend him to the care of his phyſician. [See his note, page 10.] His hardy denial that any human being can be the property of another, he is welcome to.

To a man who can look into the *ſpirit* of things, it is evident that we only purchaſe the *uſufruct* of our ſlaves, and do not buy their fleſh by the pound, or ſtickle for their bodies, when dead, and incapable of yielding that uſufruct. He pretends that we treat our Negroes worſe than we do our brutes: I wonder at his folly; he ſhould remember that we are intereſted not merely in the *lives*, but in the *offspring* of our Negroes,

 which

which is not the caſe with our *mules* and *horſes*; and he will allow that we are awakened to *intereſt*, if not to humanity.—When he ſays,

But worn by toils he can no more renew,
The helpleſs wretch is turn'd adrift by you;

he ſhould remember, that the ſavage who is capable of ſuch a brutal action is amenable to the *letter* of the laws of his country; and though I do not deny that I have myſelf known *one* or *two* inſtances of ſuch a conduct, I contend that the guilty perſons are exceptions to a general rule of a contrary conduct, and are deteſted among their fellow-citizens in the Weſt-Indies. What he ſays of a villainous principle held, that it is cheaper to buy Guinea Negroes, than rear native ones, is a poſition as untrue as it is barbarous; and I believe was never maintained by any but a fool or a devil. I wiſh that he had named the perſons who uſed his *Barbadoes gloves*. I hope that they will not wrench his own hands, in the day of judgment. Though bred and born in the iſland of Barbadoes, I declare before GOD, that I never ſaw them, nor heard of their being uſed at all. The overſeer who uſed the argument in juſtification of taking off the taylor-negroe's leg, ſhould have been mentioned by name: ſo alſo ſhould that of the lady of the author's acquaintance, who mixed the excremental draught: otherwiſe we muſt be permitted to diſbelieve it. What he ſays of *book-keepers* is *falſe*. Many a reſpectable man, having paſſed through that ſubordinate ſtation, now fills much higher ones, with reputation and integrity.

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In the midſt of all theſe illiberal attacks, let me make one or two retaliations. What, I ſay, is the *ſpirit* of that conduct, which, in the obtaining of the ſignature of the many petitions lately ſent up to the Houſe of Commons, in order to accumulate names, ſuffered ſchool-boys to ſign any fictitious names they pleaſed, and deluded ignorant men with the inſidious queſtion, ‘ Are you not averſe to being ſlaves yourſelves?’ without giving any further information on the ſubject of the petition? Is it a ſpirit from *heaven*, or ——? What is the ſpirit of that conduct, which, from the evidence given to the legiſlature, ſelects only that part which refers to one ſide of the queſtion, and excludes the other? Is it ſuch a ſpirit, which can appeal for *its juſtification to God, in the day of judgment?*

Weſt-Indians may have their faults, and their follies; but I contend that they are by nature more humane than the generality of the inhabitants of this country. I know, from my own experience, that the greateſt brutes among the ſuperintendants of Negroes in the Weſt-Indies, are Europeans. And I have only to hope that the Weſt-Indians may feel in general as ſatisfied as I am to truſt in God in the preſent emergency, and to reſt our Hope of his protection on the honeſty, virtue, and innocence, of our intentions and conduct.

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CURS'D be that baleful wit, that dares to point
Its poiſon'd ſhaft againſt the cauſe of truth,
Of virtue, and humanity, yet oft
Conceals its fell deſign beneath the veil
Of philanthropic zeal and ſympathy:
Forgetful that 'tis poſſible, at leaſt,
That what it pays to one, it yet may wreſt
From ſome not leſs deſerving relative:
Yet, oft'ner *careleſs* of the laſting ill
Its wanton obloquy may chance t' inflict

Upon a race of men who 're doom'd to bear
The ſtings of lordly malice, unreprov'd;
Incapable perhaps to weild the ſword
Of juſt defence, or ſtruggling with a load
Of prejudices baſe, and party-rage.

'Tis thus the warm Atlantic ſons deplore,
That Britain, on their all-devoted heads,
The thunders of her fury launches forth;
And with unpitying hand deſtroys
The fabric fair ſhe once was proud to rear;
Nor only ſatisfied to ſpoil their wealth,
E'en character's ſweet flow'er they blaſt,
And paint thoſe children, whom 'twas once their pride
To cheriſh with her beſt maternal care,
As now unworthy all her wonted pains,
A burden now, which once ſhe joy'd to bear,
And triumph'd as ſhe call'd it all her own!

But can it be, that Nature all her rights
Excluſive to her ſable ſons confines?
Or is it, that the Coloniſt, remov'd

From his dear country's ſhores, muſt loſe her love,
And, exil'd from her preſence, be her foe?
If e'er the name of Loyal Faith could ſound
Delightful to the ear of Royalty,
The CARIBBÆAN circle ſure muſt claim
The foſt'ring ſmiles of Britain's grateful chief:
Sure they may boaſt that, when, by fury led,
Their kindred colonies forſook their faith,
They ſtood in all their ancient promiſes,
And bore the burden of that cruel day,
Content to ſuffer ev'ry common ill.
Yet now 'tis all forgot! and ev'ry foe
That knows to mock the page of hiſtory
With gloomy phantoms of his jaundic'd mind,
May tell his tale of cruelty and woe,
And meet with ready credence from the ear
Of Sciolifts and crafty Demagogues:
While he who dares to contradict the tale,
Encounters all the bitterneſs of rage,
Of ſcorn, and mean reflection, murmuring out
Fancies that *muſt* inſult, and *may* deceive!

Say, ſhall the man, whoſe all-creative arm,
From 'mid the pathleſs wilderneſs has rais'd
A novel paradiſe, and found from toil
The well-earn'd meed of property and eaſe;
Whoſe labours Britain's laws have ſanctify'd,
And taught to hope, that what himſelf had gain'd
His lov'd poſterity might long enjoy;
Shall he, I ſay, in one ſad moment, hear
That all the wont protection is renounc'd;
Thoſe fellow-lab'rers whom his daily care
Had rear'd to turn for him the rigid glebe,
And conſtant ſhare the bounties it beſtows;
Acquit at once of obligation's bond,
Are now no more his ſlaves, and may refuſe
To ratify the mutual covenant which paid
Service with raiment, food, and patronage?

And are you ſure, Reformer, fiery red!
That what you give is worth acceptance?
Can you ſuppoſe that freedom is a boon
Where competence is wanting? Can the Black
Hail you his benefactor, when you give

A name, and ſtrip him of realities?
When you curſe him with a *fancied* liberty,
And leave him to endure the many cares
Which people each domeſtic head and heart,
To rear a tender offspring, and provide
For tott'ring age and fell infirmity?
If now he feels upon his bed of death,
No pangs of families abandon'd quite
To miſeries his arm had once repell'd,
Nor ſuffers in himſelf the chilling pangs
Of cold neglect and pinching penury?
Secure that gratitude and intereſt
Combine to give, at once, to him and them,
Such claims upon a maſter's ceaſeleſs care,
As charity ne'er gave, nor e'er ſhall give,
To the free lab'rer of Britannia's ſoil,
In ſpite of all her feign'd philanthropy:
Say, can you prove that your decretal word,
Which gives *emancipation*, can beſtow
Felicity?—and if it fail of this,
Say, are you yet ſo wedded to your ſchemes,
As ſtill to *force* your whimſies on the ſlave,

And thus compel him to a life of labour,
Without the bleſſings of his former toil;
Becauſe that you have form'd an idol here,
To which he there muſt ſacrifice his food,
His raiment, his ſecurity, and peace?

But who, you'll ſay, ſhall guard the wretched ſlave
From tyrant-cruelty and bloody ſcourge?
Believe me he requires no hand to guard,
No interference from your mad'ning zeal:
The world in all its varying climes may ſhew
Some ſad exceptions to a rule of love;
But not a ſpot exiſts, where rage and hate
Prevail as genial principles to act;
And even where the charities of life
Are laid aſleep, when paſſions wake to rule,
The voice of intereſt will be heard aloud;
Nor yet in any ſtate of life more loud,
Than when ſhe teaches ev'ry maſter's heart,
That all his wealth is center'd in his ſlave,
Both what he gave, to realize *his* labours,
As what he hopes to find from all thoſe fields,

Which teem no produce, and no harveſt yield,
Without the hand of man to draw them forth.

But after all, when this great work is done,
When you have fill'd this hemiſphere with rage,
Againſt the children of the Weſtern world,
Can you look up to GOD, and boldly ſay,
My motive was to ſerve his creatures,
And further his deſigns of genial love?
Ruſh not upon " the boſſes of his ſhield,"
Nor dare his thunders by a falſehood baſe;
But hang your heads, and ſmite your guilty breaſts,
As you confeſs, becauſe you can't deny,
That pride, or vanity, or envy mean,
Or malice fell, or private views, firſt arm'd
Your zeal; and ſhame has ſince impell'd you on,
Your cruel work of darkneſs to complete;
Hoping the while that late poſterity
May eagerly believe, that virtue's cauſe
Was your's, at leaſt in your intention pure,
And that your crime was all involuntary:
But hear me now, while yet 'tis time to hear,

No late poſterity, nor diſtant age,
Will be thus ſhamefully deceiv'd;
Your names will faithful to their times deſcend,
In all the blackneſs of your infamy;
And you'll be known to be, what you yourſelves
Now feel, to your own coſt, to be too true,
That not to ſerve *humanity*, but ſelf,
Was all your motive, and, that ſelf-appeas'd,
The ſable ſlave, the cruel lord, alike
May go—where you, alas! may chance to go;
And in their own experience find, that he
Who truſts in human virtue, tugs a rope
Of ſand, and worſhips 'fore a wooden god!
That GOD alone can ſave the ſon of woe,
And give that beſt of liberty which lives
In ſouls, emancipate from thralling ſin;
That peace which man can neither give nor take,
But which his bleſſed Son bequeath'd to all,
Who liv'd his life, and lov'd his love, divine!

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